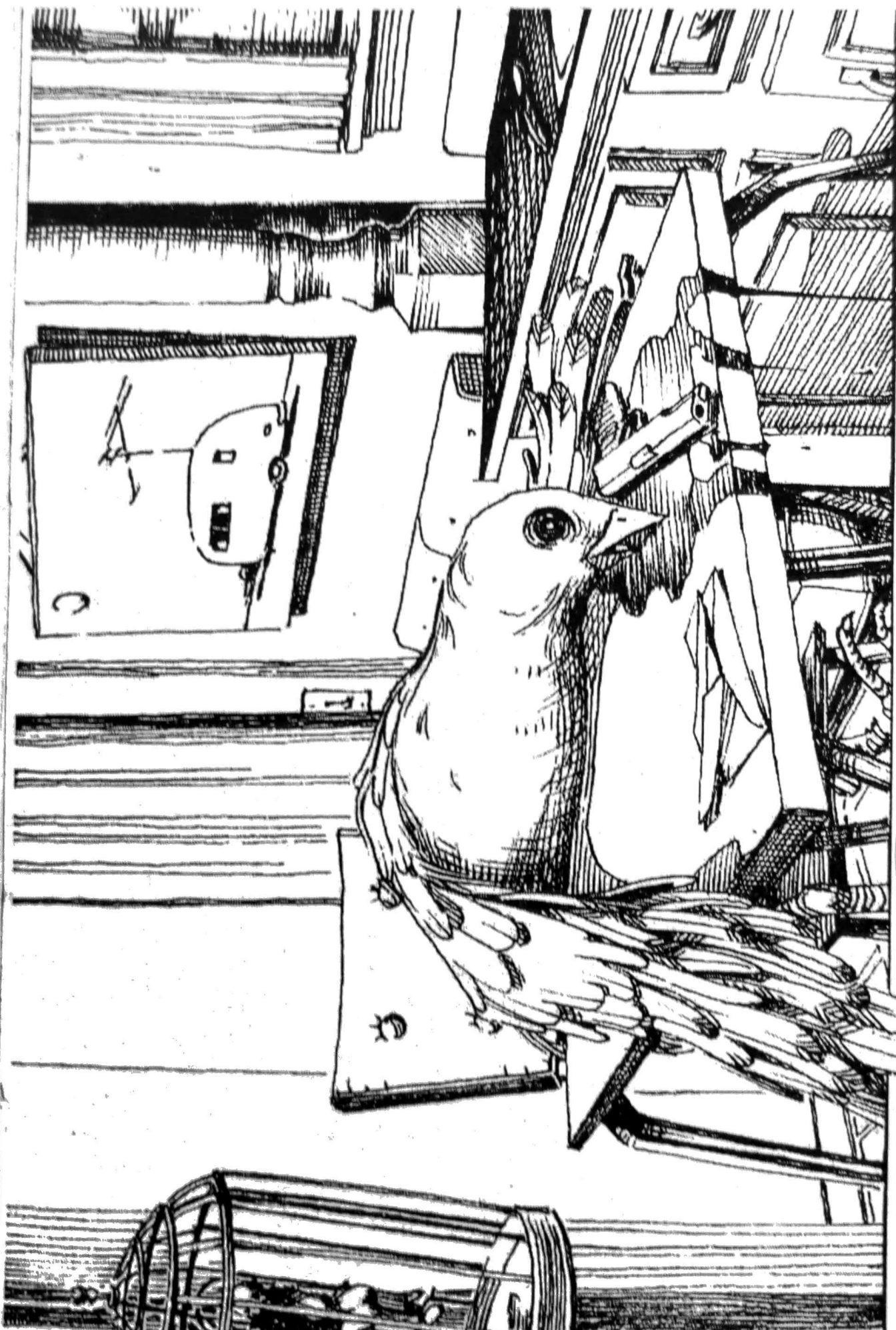


BE BRAVE BOLD ROBOT 2013 AUTUMNAL



Будь Смелый Храбрый Робот

PLEASE. PUT DOWN THE CAR AND PICK UP THAT BIKE.

I am a bicycle commuter. And I'm kind of self-righteous about it. Meaning, when I get my fat ass up in the morning and I know it would be easier and (sometimes) faster for me to hop in my car and drive the 3 miles to work (and even park for free), but instead I get on that bicycle and pedal, I strongly perceive myself as doing the right thing. the best thing for myself and for my community. On top of providing much needed exercise, it increases pedestrian visibility (and interaction) while simultaneously decreasing single passenger vehicle traffic visibility (and noise, pollution, potential fatalities, etc.), related phenomena that I perceive as extremely important to the overall psychological and emotional health of our society, and wish would be given more credence in discussions of policy. More people should be riding bikes to work and other places, with their kids, with racks and saddle bags carrying stuff, and it upsets me when this reality doesn't come manifest, like, right now. I'm spitting mad that we have lazily allowed automobile dependence to make us less bikey! but you know what, I KNOW. I know that you live farther away from work than three miles, and I know that you have kids that I don't have and it's annoyingly time consuming and possibly stressful to worry about them on bikes, much less yourself. We've created convenience that we did not anticipate would eventually become the same unhealthy addiction that plagues us. I know. and so, I offer words of encouragement in the form of this rambling proselytization for the church of Bicycle Tourism.

We, three of us, landed in Joshua Tree National Park in the dark (indeed, driving a polluting honda, but a smaller newer one), and quickly set to sleep for morning embarkation. come morn, we strapped bags and tents on top of stuffed and heavy panniers, parked the car for the week, and off we went. I hit a wall after just ten miles. It was apparent that my piddly 6 miles a day in no way prepared me for such a thing as bicycle touring. I am a city cyclist and I am out of shape. Pain and numbness came and went in my nether regions and in my hands. (note: Padding. need more padding at handgrips and/or gloves for long rides)

by Dean Haakenson

We rode that first day 65 miles all the way through the main road in the park. Painfully slow uphill climbs (breath, breath, one pedal at a time, keep the rhythm, choo choo. note: get new front gear cassette that has that third "granny" gear) gave way to frighteningly long and steep downhills (muscles tight, brakes constantly engaged, note: wear helmet... who am I kidding, I can't wear a helmet) and slowly, but surely, Joshua Tree made an impression on our senses as we cruised by at 17 miles per hour (35 down the hills!) The Mojave Desert's "indicator species" Joshua Trees dwindled into The Colorado Desert's warmer, lower elevation and the frosted Cholla and ganglilly attractive Cotillo as we descended into the valleys at the southern end of the park. I was happy to find that the cottonwood campground, although filled with the ever-present RVs of America's Adventurous Elderly (AAE), had an unoccupied group site right near the entrance, into which our exhaustion could collapse. Remote and now into nighttime, It was obvious that no group was coming, so we set up camp (and dug into one of several simple tasty meals I was grateful to my companions for always quickly preparing. dried refried beans, dried hummus, cheese, a stick of salami, nuts, snacks... we did good on the camping food). I indicated that we took the group site on the pay envelope, containing just the normal campsite amount, and slid it into the lockbox. This was the first of many minor transgressions (and accompanying exhaustion-exacerbated paranoia) we undertook in the course of our trip, our fears assuaged by the eventually obvious apathy or nonexistence of hypothetical authority figures. We camped half of our six nights on land in and around those desert cities that was not intended for camping. Although I suppose in the desert, one can meander miles into the nature and find a great spot for a tent and not be bothered, like, ever. The spaces between cacti and plants wide enough for a loaded bike, and the ground hard and flat enough to roll it on. (note: NEVER forget a patch kit and stick pump)

Day two put us 50 miles through the manmade freakish Salton Sea (aka Salton Sewer aka Salton Stink, desert agricultural return watershed hypernutritionalizes algal blooms in that already saline water, killing off the man-stocked masses of fish and even birds, all that detritus settling into the anaerobic bottom water which when surfaces, Pee Yew!) and on the S22 to

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lovely Borrego Springs (a bumpy road broken over time by heavy vehicles, towing ATVs of all sorts, out to myriad ATV dirt racecourses snaking through the compromised wilderness. Recreational Vehicling at it's Vroomiest.) All in all the sort of expansive wild west debauchery that made me reflect; on the one hand, we on our bikes were able to be out on our fun and fulfilling tour purely by the grace of the cement paths put there by the growth of the same human desert occupation and vehicular proliferation soring my senses. Pure hypocrisy for me to curse its existence. But on the other self-aggrandizing hand (shaking itself) we embraced our coolness (the only bicycle tourists we saw the entire time, not to be confused with the slews of colorfully spandexed old men on very expensive and lightweight bikes) and cynically wondered how many hundreds of years (the intellectual revolution hopefully gaining momentum by then), maybe just one or two, until gone will be the endangered Palm Canyon big horned sheep, and the rest of the complex and delicate desert ecosystems in that area, until we're down to that final parasitic human species that will putter around the wasteland in ATVs for a bit before finally retreating to the urban centers where it belongs (and where bioengineers will be working on newer and more drought resistant species, yay!)

We would have conversations whilst riding, the three of us, on lonelier stretches of road when we didn't have to fall into single file formation for cars to pass, or when the wider shoulders allowed. Bike Party! Sometimes, I would turn back to my pedaling, and my instinct would be to increase my pace, and I would slowly pull away, the conversation of my companions fading into what I whimsically regarded as my ongoing, mostly one-sided conversation with the wind. You see, one can only have a conversation with the wind when they get up to the wind's speed. At walking paces, the wind's a stranger, except in those unreliable instances when the wind really wants to be heard and gets loud enough for the slow to listen. In a car, one must contend with the road noise and the engine noise, but the wind, she talks there, sure. But it's really on a bike, at wind speed, when you shove your face at her and she gets to talking, that you really get an earful, filling your mind with white noise and natural nonsense.

It was on that fourth day, wherein we rode a total of 70 miles, out of the ATV theme park and through the desert towns of Coachella Valley, that I really embraced what was happening (aside from RVs taking over the world!) I was feeling stronger from the couple days of exercise; When I started riding, my crotch and hands would numb after several miles, but it would be less severe, and easier to put out of mind. I'm not sure if my muscles were gaining strength and calluses, or if my mind was retraining nerves in anticipation of repetitive painful activity, but the riding was feeling easier. I would notice brief breaks for consuming food and water would replenish waning energy, and I would find moments when I felt like I could pedal forever. I realized there was something of a system to all this work, and so I give you my

Amateur Bicycle Tourist's Rules of the Road:

1) KEEP RIDING. IT GETS EASIER. you WILL get to that destination, however far away, even if you have hours left to ride, and it already hurts and you just want to stop and cry and have a beer and a TV show. Even if you have to walk for a couple miles because it hurts that bad, go ahead and walk a bit, and then Keep Riding. In the long term, you keeping riding will just make every single time you get back on a bike more familiar and more fun and less like work. The pain will be lessened the stronger your bicycle muscles get, and that pain and numbness will be less each time and go away more quickly. I noticed I would hit a point each day, after pain had come and settled, and miles had passed, where I would feel like I had hit a stride, and I was letting my mind wander as I just pedaled and took in the views, and I no longer thought about the immediacy of what I was doing, or how many miles were left to our destination. I just existed in a pedaling state, and it was nice. I was free (and what exercise!) I think that might sum up the allure of long bicycle trips and long runs for people in that sort of shape; that moment where you are comfortable and your mind and body feel good, and you're still moving... you're a well-oiled machine in its preferred state.

2) LISTEN TO YOUR BODY AS YOU KEEP RIDING (except for the part that tells you stop because it hurts too much). Be mindful of caloric intake and

hydration effecting your energy levels and mood. I know I live most of my life eating more calories than I burn off, not really doing too much continual exercise to warrant the eating, and sometimes I think I eat because it's mealtime or I'm bored and not because my body is sending me signals to intake nutrients. It's amazing how good salt and fat and water taste when your body needs those nutrients to continue working. I remember moments of numbing pain and wanting to quit as I slowly creaked up a hill, and then stopping to eat and drink, and then quickly feeling my body invigorate, energy improved, mood happy and optimistic.

3) DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE CARS, they will probably not hit you. Even the most blurry eyed and moronic driver will notice the bicycle mass on the shoulder, and hold fast to the instinct to drive over as much as possible to avoid hitting it. You can't escape the stress inherent in large vehicles zooming mere feet or inches past your pedaling meditation, any one of which could just graze you and send you toppling, or worse. But you must not freak out. A bicycle tourist will sometimes need to ride amongst town traffic or on skinny two lane roads with too many cars on them. So, just focus and keep your line. Give yourself enough shoulder, but not too much. You'll be fine. I recommend riding with a defensive confidence (which might sometimes feel like angry desperation; go with it).

4) KEEP RIDING. IT GETS EVEN EASIER. The day after arriving back home, I willingly, easily, and with only mild gluteal numbation, rode the 20 miles from Broderick to Woodland for Yolo County jury duty. In contrast to the touring I had just done, this felt easy and fun, and much less like the work that this same trip would have been in previous times when I was not riding regularly. PS. when riding to Woodland, avoid the Google Maps directed Road 126 to 124 path (part of which, a gravel road), and just stay on the ample-shouldered albeit moderately trafficked main Old River Road. PPS. Sacramento, please do a corporate merger with West Sacramento so that we can inject some reason into the region and I can attend jury duty in the downtown near which I deliberately live.

A further bit of advice would be to upgrade your gear as you learn what you

don't like about your current gear. I'll let you figure that out. pack layers, pack light. keep your tires inflated. padded seats are great, but I think it's safe to warn that an unfit tuchus will numb and hurt no matter what seat you're using, until, of course, you keep riding and get that area stronger. and some padded shorts.

We finished off the tour with another 47 miles in two days, 232 total, and then gladly hitched a lift the remaining 20 miles up a hellish hill back to the car. "We have paniers, you can trust ^{us}." And then we were done. ate fast food on the way home. I'm trying to hold on to the memories of that majestic desert feeling, and those serene pedaling moments in between the workouts. I dreamed of the desert for a couple days after. But all things end, and here I am at home. at the screens. comfortable. and trying not only to keep up the commuting the six miles to work and back, but to also get myself out there on the bike more often, visible, on the shoulder, working those pedals like I don't care how far away my destination. Ride to the grocery store. Ride to the friend's house. soon I'll do the trail to folsom again. Must plan some more Bicycle Touring. And, maybe you can go do that too, eh? Come on. Ride your bike. Get a Bike. It only gets easier.



Pig-Pen

During the American Civil War, Northern prisoners in Southern jails used a strange looking code to send secret messages to their friends. To understand Pig-Pen, first draw the lines for a tic-tac-toe game. Next, write the alphabet in the tic-tac-toe spaces this way:

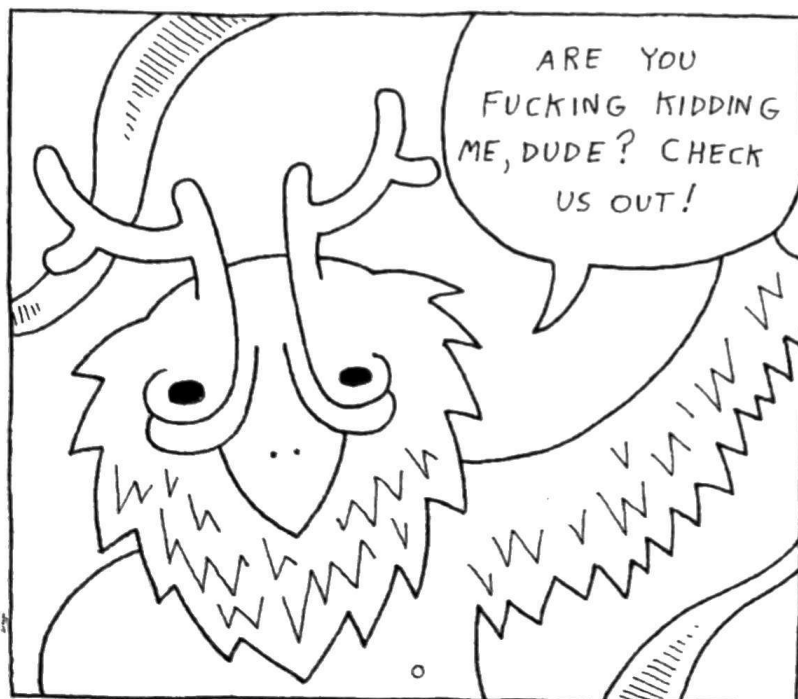
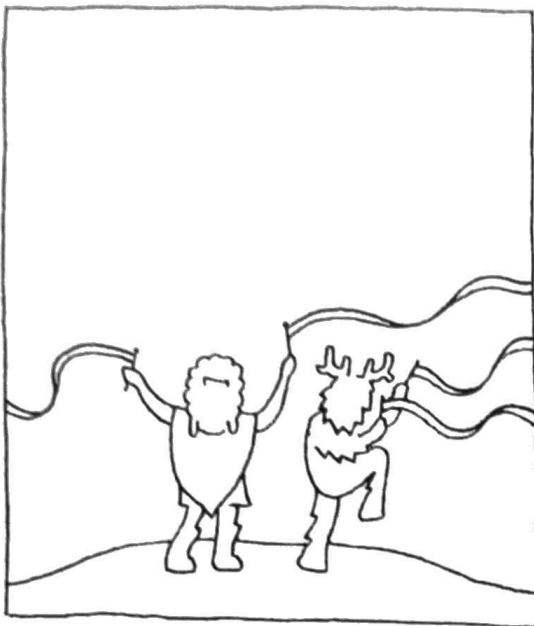


Here is how to put a message into code. First, draw each letter of the alphabet using the pattern of lines around it in the Pig-Pen key. For example, A = , and M = . But, there are three letters in every section of the pattern—except for the very last one, where there are only two. In order to show the differences between them, the second letter of each group in the pattern has a dot on top of it. The third letter in each group has two dots. So, for the second letter, draw the pattern and put a dot in it. B = . For the third letter, draw the pattern and put two dots in it. O = . And for the first letter, you will not need to use any dots.

So, in Pig-Pen code, BE CAREFUL = 

Here is a message for you to decode:





Behind the Eyes of a Man in Summer– June 30th, 2013

Frank Loret de Mola

Sacramento and the way we welter in the sun's rays. The sweltering swoons of pedestrians leaning to the easements as we pass each other, evading bodies, those other exothermals; a touch could catastroph an already tolling stroll.

The leader is led in roles reversed; Anthrocentrism can not hold. Dogs tow our legs from their leashes onward, drooling proud smiles behind them. We higher have fewer respites from that balled up lung, respiring a breathless fire through our throats, baking a bellows down our bones, our invisible panting inaudibly coughing corona flares.

I've been told that we move like lizards in the summer, here, in our town. Let it snow in Komodo, then, so you may hear their dragons gurgle, their bacterial bites narrowed to a thin grin, their tongues tucked behind their teeth, their final throes a kitten's purr.

STUTTERING:

A Guide

*These are the stutter-preventing techniques that
I was taught in speech therapy:*

01.

The "Delayed Onset" technique:

Description: The stutterer begins exhaling before he/she starts to speak.

Drawbacks: Has the side of effect of sometimes adding an unwanted "H" at the beginning of sentences ("Hi'm from Miami, Florida", "Hanybody wanna get dinner?", etc.)

Verdict: Useful only in small doses.

by Dan Goldman

o2.

2. The "Steady Breathing" technique:

Description: Taught via a severely outdated computer program and a weird springy thing that attaches to the stutterer's chest, which graphs the stutterer's breathing on a two dimensional axis: chest-inflation from inhalation on the y-axis, and time on the x-axis. The stutterer tries to create a breath v. time function that resembles a pleasantly sloped hill with no points of steep incline or decline.

Drawbacks: Makes breathing take a very long time; doesn't actually help at all with stuttering.

Verdict: Not recommended.

o3.

The "Stretching and Linking" technique:

Description: The stutterer connects the ending of each word to the beginning of the word that follows, thereby stretching out vowel sounds.

Drawbacks: maake sthees tuutteers ouunds oomething liiketh iis.

Verdict: Avoid at all costs.

01.

These are the stutter-preventing techniques that I actually use:

The "Spazing Out" technique:

Description: The stutterer blinks rapidly and twitches his/her head violently (arm flailing is optional). The stutterer does this as an attempt to distract him/herself from the fact that his/her own vocal pathway is blocked, in hopes that the impediment will disappear if it is ignored.

Drawbacks: Makes the stutterer look like Rain Man.

Verdict: Useful, though drawbacks outweigh benefits.

02.

The "Feigned Forgetfulness" technique:

Description: The stutterer gives the impression that he/she is pausing because he/she is having difficulty thinking of the right word to say. In fact, the stutterer is simply waiting for the tightening in his/her throat to subside (often combined with technique #1).

Drawbacks: The stutterer will learn the hard way that people are very impatient. The technique can also lead to painfully embarrassing situations for the stutterer, such as the stutterer appearing to have forgotten his/her own name.

Verdict: Effective, but risky.

03.

The "Rewording" technique:

Description: The stutterer substitutes a word that tends to lead to stuttering (usually the first word of the sentence) with a word that is easier to say; hard Ps, Ks, and Bs, for example, tend to be the most difficult, vowel sounds, sibilants, and Hs tend to be the easiest. (Note: There have been reports of stutterers changing their names for this very reason, which is perhaps the most extreme use of this technique.)

Drawbacks: Can lead to bizarre linguistic constructions. Can also lead to the stutterer abandoning the very thing he/she wanted to say in the first place.

Verdict: Tempting to use, but the urge should usually be fought.

01.

*This is the one technique I've never been
able to even attempt:*

The "Just Stuttering" technique:

Description: The stutterer stutters. This is harder than it sounds. To apply this technique successfully, the stuttering must be obvious and clear, and should not be followed by an apology or any feelings of embarrassment or shame or whatever it was that led him/her to spend absurd amounts of mental energy developing habits that mask the speech impediment itself. The stutterer may get frustrated that his/her speaking partner does not understand what has

happened, and that his/her speaking partner thinks that the stutterer is having some sort of panic attack, or thinks that he/she is nervous about speaking, or whatever it is that people seem to think. The stutterer must not show this frustration or act on it. Upon reflection, the stutterer should realize that his/her stuttering is really not a big deal at all, and that his/her speaking partner probably isn't secretly passing judgment or getting annoyed, but is merely listening, and, in fact, is probably too busy minding his/her own anxieties to notice that any speech has been momentarily impeded. This realization, perhaps, will comfort the stutterer and thereby lead, in theory, to less stuttering.

Drawbacks: (see above).

Verdict: Inconclusive.



R.E.C.I.P.E.

(Religion, Excess, and Cars Insipidly Poison Everything)

A song by Be Brave Bold Robot www.bebraveboldrobot.com

Though I may listen while you tell me all about
how you saw jesus and the angels coming out his mouth,
I do it out of love, a patient reverence of
the thing inside you that just wants to be understood.
But I can't understand how any grown human can
think it more than just a product of the mind of man.
it is the deepest well, and I have seen it swell
my head with demons and a god I thought I knew so well.
but I began to see that what was god was me;
you fill a baby full of rules, that's all he's gonna be.
Searching eternally, in each epiphany.
Desperation turns to manufacturing meaning

till it's gotten your thoughts in a dogmatic box,
deliberately blocking the gospel.
The most recent news of our evolution.
The collective mind has found divine
(And the night)
becomes a normal thing, and when the morning brings
our piece of planet back around into the scattering
of sunlight in the air, a blanket blueing.
Where the stars delighted, I promise that they're all still there.
Beyond our atmosphere, way out, we've measured.
Where we feared reproachment, just a vacuum and some burning
spheres.

And if we go to hell, they won't care.
cuz they're just there.

I've heard it all before:
We don't know what's in store.
It takes your life to learn to live and then you live no more,
so it'd be tragic if, instead of magic,
it's just blackness waiting beyond death's door.
This aint all we're here for, there's something more.
A meaning to this mess, of this we're all so sure
heaven's doors will open onto all of our rewards
timeless, painless in the bosom of the Lord
all will be forgiven, this reckless way of living

this pain we bring, this human thing - just pray it away

and we'll remind ourselves everyday
(or at least once a week)
And it won't get in the way...

"got alotta shit to do, you know I gotta get paid!"

"hit and miss with that decency, it's okay"

"'nother world after this one anyway..."

so right now we should all be

Breeding and Driving, Yeah! (human race in first place)

BREEDING AND DRIVING, YEAH! (human beans reign supreme)

BREEDING AND DRIVING, YEAH!!!!

We are living in an ever-growing age of reason
where science is the reason for the seasons.
we used to make all of it up to service just one purpose;
a Land without a Law can make alotta people nervous.
Although still we find the evildoers all around
they say "teach em god is great and the guilt'll keep em straight
cuz it's the praying and the rituals that will unite us..."

Like I can't love a man without a bible in my hand.
and so

I cry out SHAM, take a goddamn stand
and I'll cry it again and again and again
and if that magic land doesn't let me in
I run that risk for reasons far outweighing all my sins;
to train the brains to not forget that from the dawn of man
we made the questions and then made up ways to answer them
and been replacing gods with observations ever since.

and I got a feeling that we'll figure out this puzzle yet
and learn to love like we were never told that we were broke and
maybe one day I will see you free of this burden.

It's a tragic distraction.
You know you make the magic.
Yeah.

Dean, we were just talking about cryptic crosswords and then they just had two such clues in the episode of Endeavour that played on Masterpiece on Sunday. Still available on PBS website.

(typed out and placed on my chair by the delightfully anglophilic, slightly older attorney lady I work closely with... she likes emails and is welcoming the digital age with open arms, but she often can't stop herself from typing out notes and printing website images instead of just emailing me the notes/links... it's adorable.)

The character young Endeavour Morse is a detective investigating a murder. He interviews a possible witness who is a clergyman. They learn that they both like crosswords. The clergyman says he is feeling unusually dull that day, having trouble with his latest crossword. Endeavour looks it over and says something like: You'd do well to get 11 Down, nine letters, "Running over a dune is an effort."

The show doesn't tell the answer but it turns out to be an in joke because the answer is "endeavour." The phrase "over a dune" is an anagram for "endeavour."

Then, later in the episode that clergyman leaves a clue for Morse: "after beard teased, an exclamation of surprise will bring you home."

That answer is "breadcrumbs." "after beard teased" means you have to rearrange the letters of the word "beard." After bread comes "an exclamation of surprise." The word crumbs is a slang expression of surprise in Britain. The phrase "will bring you home" is a reference to the whole word of the answer, breadcrumbs, a reference to Hansel and Gretel. In the show the clergyman left that clue for Morse to tell him that he had left another puzzle identifying the murderer.

from *The Hobo Speaks* by Mark Bell, m_bell92@yahoo.com - buy it online!

To avoid and annul any pretense that I am garrulously and overzealously educated,
I am not.

I am a miscreant, a vagabond, a transient and a ner-do-well.

Now on fifty years I have charted my course through this life,
misjudging a few crossroads.

A misstep, a stumble, an awkward placing of a misguided footfall.

Yet here I am in a city that has coveted me as a long forgotten son, returned.

Coveted may be too strong a turn so let's just go with tolerated and overlooked.

I once walked the path of straight and narrow but the moon and stars misled.

The sun rises easterly and sets in the west, but in between is dedicated to survival.

I ask no quarter, but give my dollar to those in need, not pity.

I'm on almost every corner, outside most coffee shops and prowling dumpsters in
darkened alleys.

I am... The Hobo.

Our Camp

The lush greens of the forest around our camp help to soothe the fraying nerves when we
return at the end of the day. It has only been a week since we got our new tent and
sleeping bags and already it feels like home to one and all. The dual burner propane
stove sits regally atop an old tree stump, making smoky campfires, blessedly, a thing of
the past.

Our red, side by side folding chairs are extremely comfortable and the aluminum frame
sparkles in the warm afternoon sun.

The sturdily constructed privy stands honorably off to the left behind a majestic old
dogwood tree. Its curtain slowly sways in the wind.

All of this will never impress the editors of Home and Garden magazine,
fore it is not only a homeless camp that no one really cares about.

It's two feet underwater due to a recent heavy rain.

Forgotten

For many moons his family has lived on without him.

Though by the campfires flickering light, his mind harkens back.

To days of comfortably used bicycles, thumb bells resounding in the cul-de-sac.

Children in shorts running, jumping, laughing in the cool waters of the lawn sprinklers.

The co-mingling smells of food emanating from well tended bar-b-que pits.

Grown-ups, assorted cold drinks in hand, cast watchful eyes about their surroundings.

Dogs chasing cats, cats chasing squirrels, teenagers languidly throwing a ball.

The lawns and numerous gardens, a testament to careful sculpting and maintenance.

The lush green canopy of leaves provide a cooling respite from the summer sun.

A car passes and knowing smiles and a wave are exchanged.

Conversations resume.

The last vestiges of twilight darken the starry sky, cloudless and warm as the day.

Thunderous pops overhead as the fireworks expel their multi-colored, panoramic display.

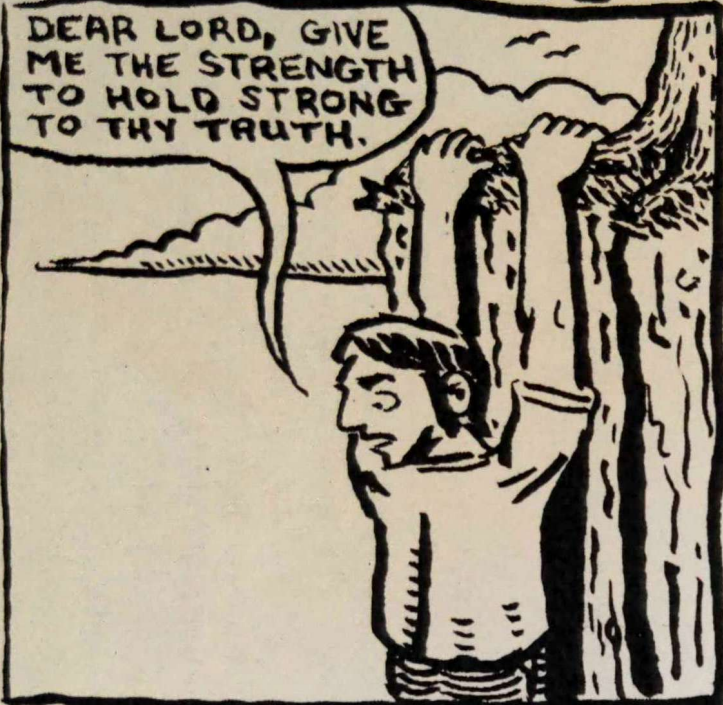
I return to the hovel that is my campsite.

Another holiday alone fades to black.

RISK MEANING NOTHING

by HardPressed Jess at hardpressedink.com

DEAR LORD, GIVE
ME THE STRENGTH
TO HOLD STRONG
TO THY TRUTH.



BECAUSE WITHOUT
YOU, I KNOW I
WOULD FALL
INTO THE VOID
OF NOTHINGNESS.



SAY, WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING UP
THERE?

ACK!!!
SATAN?!?!
GET BEHIND
ME SATAN!!



RELAX, I JUST
WANNA TALK.
WHATCHA
DOIN'?

WELL, IF YOU
MUST KNOW
I'M CLINGING
TO THE TREE
OF LIFE TO
KEEP FROM
FALLING TO
MY DOOM.



BUT, THE
GROUND'S
RIGHT
HERE!!

YEAH, I UH--
KINDA NOTICED
THAT, BUT THE
ELDERS TOLD
ME THAT'S AN
ILLUSION.



THEY SAID CLINGING TO THE
TREE OF LIFE IS THE ONLY
TRUTH, THAT IF I LET GO
I RISK LOSING MEANING.



YEAH, BUT HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF THAT'S TRUE IF YOU'RE ALWAYS JUST HANGING THERE, STUCK?



THERE'S A WHOLE UNIVERSE OF MYSTERY OUT THERE TO EXPLORE.



LET GO OF CERTAINTY & YOU BEGIN THE GREATEST ADVENTURE LIFE HAS TO OFFER. WHO KNOWS WHERE YOU'LL END UP!!



BUT-- WHAT IF I DO THAT AND I FIND ... NOTHING?

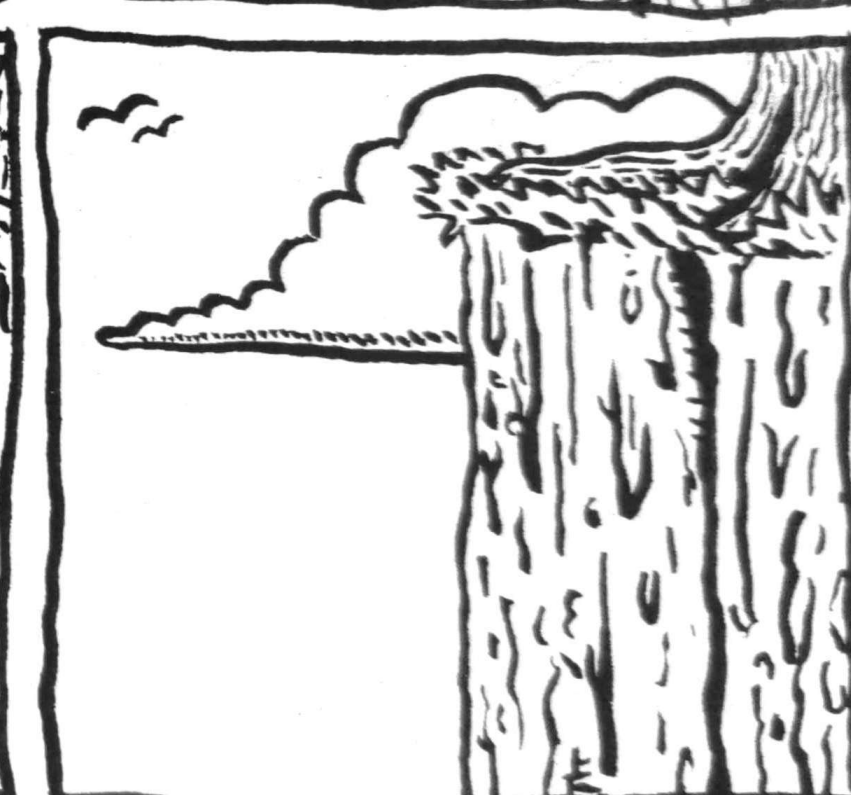


NOTHING? "NOTHING" ISN'T SOMETHING.



"NOTHING" IS JUST AN ABSENCE. IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT YOU CAN FILL IT. WITH WHATEVER YOU LIKE.





Sometimes I look upon the tableau of humanity around me as a great garden. Some parts are meticulously taken care of and are beautiful. Other parts are just as meticulously taken care of, but taken care of in an inefficient one-size-fits-all manner that grooms weeds, kills seeds, and cuts flowers off as they bloom due to their aberrant color and petal schemes. I wonder what some of those gardeners are thinking.

There are particular hives of bees I want pollinating my patch of garden, and I must admit I bloom flowers tailored to attract them. I have some odd-looking plants here, but they're very beautiful if one has the taste to recognize the beauty in what looks like a patch of mint green razor blades with purple tips.

When I bloom, the bees make me happy. There are buzz buzz vroom vroom bees and I focus my consciousness into the pollen they take from me, and we go off on great adventures flying low through the bushes and flowers. There are the big bumblebees who dance around in patterns, imparting great wisdom through movement and wing pitch regulation. Of course there are the purple bees, but they swarm around me all the time, so I think of them as a unified cloud of purpleness. There are also the amazing black wasps who keep picking up sharp hardened pieces of my fallen spines and slashing nearby ticks just to watch them bleed.

Oh Goddess, how I want one of them to sting me! Repeatedly.

As a perennial, when I'm not in bloom, I still look pretty vibrant, even though deep down inside, I'm likely questioning the value of my existence. "Look at those winter flowers over there and there! THEY should be here in my spot rather than me. Yet, while feeling so down about myself, there's still a part of me that knows I'm still purple and green and full of life all winter long. Rather than be down on myself, I do my best to comfort the annuals as they die, letting them know how beautiful they were and how amazing their seeds will grow to be. I feel the weight in my spines though, as love flows out of me, and sadness and fear flow in. I must do this to breathe though, you understand?

Nobody thinks really highly of carbon dioxide except the plants. The plants, however, are cee-oh-two connoisseurs.

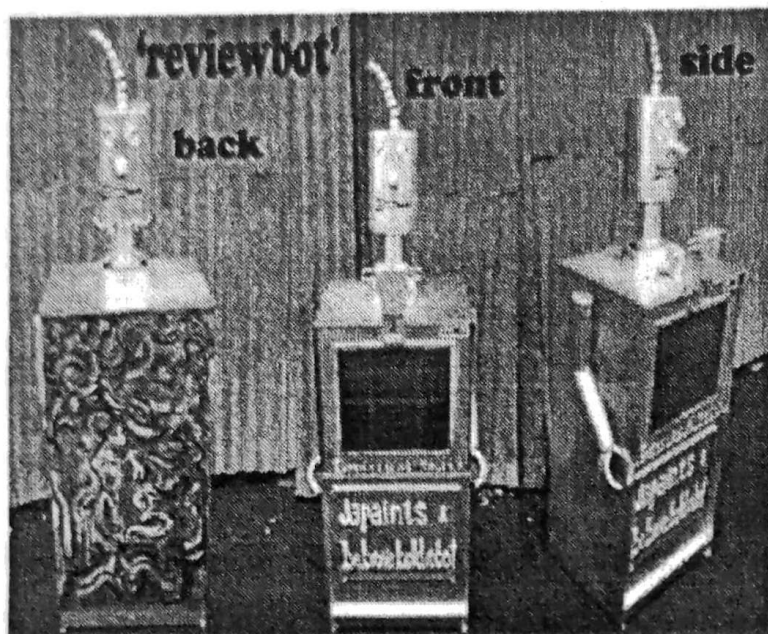
It's a slippery slope, mind you... or at least it was for me.

First was the taste of wind-blown sand... then came the bite of the hungry caterpillar and how it would make the air smell sour around the wounds. Hard rains and brutal freezes indoctrinated me into the world of constant suffering, and I persevered and survived! In the process, though, something inside me had changed. Spring came around again, and I basked in the warmth and the light and the bees. Yet a dense hard ball had formed in the core of my being, and nothing would loosen it and relieve its tension but the brutal misery of winter... or possibly... being cut with my own hardened fallen spine fragments by the black wasp who does not die when she stings...

Sometimes, when those fragments are too green and won't cut, the wasp drops them in the dirt, and roots desperately shoot out. If the roots take, there I am. That's the nature of being able to clone yourself, I guess... Wherever you go, there you are.

MISSING

SACRAMENTO NEWS & REVIEWBOT



AGE - UNDETERMINED
EYES - BOGGLED
HAIR - ANTENNAE
HEIGHT - ~4 FEET
WEIGHT - 50 lbs
LAST SEEN -
IN FRONT OF OLD
IRONSIDES BAR ON
10TH AND S STREET.

A SEARCH CONTINUES FOR A NEWSSTAND MODELED AFTER A ROBOT. IT WAS BROUGHT INTO THIS WORLD 2 YEARS AGO TO BRING JOY TO SACRAMENTO. SADLY, IT TURNED OUT THAT SOMEONE WOULD DECIDE THAT THEY WANTED ALL OF THE HAPPINESS TO THEMSELF. I BEG YOU...PLEASE RETURN THE REVIEWBOT TO THE PLACE WHERE YOU UNLAWFULLY TOOK IT FROM, SO WE CAN ALL ENJOY THE SPLENDOR OF HIM IN ALL OF HIS METALLIC BEAUTY. THERE WAS LOTS OF HARD WORK INVOLVED TO BRING HIM TO YOU...NOW GIVE HIM BACK PLEASE. HE DOES NOT BELONG TO YOU. THANKS!

PLEASE HELP
